

Performance Management

Chapter 5-Highlights

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Excellence, Achievement and Recognition System (EARS)

Changes in federal regulations paved the way for the development of performance management systems that are tailored to individual agency organizational environments. Due to this change Coast Guard was able to charter a Civilian Performance Management Design Team to craft a new evaluation system. As a result of their work, the Excellence, Achievement and Recognition System (EARS) was designed and then implemented in 1999. EARS is a three-level rating system that emphasizes mutual communication, accountability, simplicity and flexibility with the ultimate objective being "a performance management system that recognizes and rewards results, fosters effective communication and performance feedback, and links individual performance to organizational outcomes."

By law, agencies are required to have a performance management system, that appraises employees performance and the results of such may be used as a basis for personnel decisions related to:

- Training;
- Rewarding;
- Reassigning;
- Promoting;
- Reducing in grade;
- Retaining; and
- Removing employees.

Purpose of EARS

EARS is designed to:

- Clarify individual and organizational goals and objectives;
- Evaluate individual and organizational work accomplishments;
- Provide the basis for training
- Provide the basis for denying within-grade increases
- Recognize employee work accomplishments through the payment of performance awards for employees whose performance is rated "meets" and above;
- Provide a means of evaluating the performance of probationary employees; and
- Provide a means for linking performance to such personnel actions as reassignment, demotion, removal, reduction-in-force, and promotion.

For further guidance on EARS, refer to Commandant Instruction M12430.6B and/or the EARS website at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgpc/cpm/home/EARS.htm> or call your Command Staff Advisor or the Workforce Development and Sustainment Division, G-WPC-3.

Terms and Definitions Related To EARS

There are many terms and definitions related EARS. Please refer to COMDT INSTRUCTION M12430.6B for the full list. Following is an abbreviated list of terms and definitions related to EARS:

Performance: How an employee accomplishes assigned duties and responsibilities

Appraisal: Comparison of an employee's performance against core competencies

Core Competencies (CC's): Organizational values that apply broadly to all or many jobs. Using core competencies helps link individual performance with organizational goals in such areas as timeliness, quality, customer service, and leadership, etc. Each CC has a generic standard that provides examples of performance at the "Meets" level. All CC's are critical.

Appraisal Period: The period of time established by an appraisal system for which an employee's performance will be reviewed; also known as the rating cycle. The minimum appraisal period is 90 days. In the Coast Guard, the appraisal period is from 1 April to 31 March

Delayed Rating: A written evaluation of an employee's performance the rating official prepares whenever an employee is new to the Coast Guard and has not been completed 90 days under and approved plan by the end of the rating cycle (March 31). The plan is then extended, so the employee will have 90 days and can receive a full appraisal. A delayed rating is also prepared when an employee is rated "Fails to Meet". The employee is given another 90-day period to improve their performance.

Interim Rating: A written evaluation of an employee's performance the rating official prepares whenever an employee (1) completes a detail or temporary promotion of 90 or more days on an approved performance plan; (2) after being on an approved performance plan for at least 90 days, moves to a new position inside or outside the Coast Guard, or (3) has been on an approved performance plan for at least 90 days, under the supervision of a rating official who, having supervised the employee for at least 90 days then leaves his or her position. The interim rating evaluates performance against each CC in an employee's performance plan and also includes a complete narrative statement of performance. No summary or overall rating is assigned

Steps in the Performance Appraisal Process

Step 1: Developing The Performance Plan (Part IIa and Part IIb)

The first task you perform in the appraisal process is to develop the employee's Performance Plan (Part II of the appraisal form). The performance plan should be based on organizational objectives and the requirements of the employee's position. As supervisor you should identify the applicable core competencies that you will rate each employee against. Also, we strongly

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encourage the development of a Work Plan. The work plan is a roadmap designed to clarify standards and or specific tasks, timetables, and/or resources.

The plan spells out:

- • What the employee is expected to do;
- • How well the employee is expected to perform;
- • Specific tasks and projects to be accomplished.

Employee involvement in developing the plan is expected and strongly encouraged. However, final authority for establishing the Plan rests with the supervisor. Before the Plan becomes final, it must be reviewed and approved by the second level supervisor (approving official). Changes to the Plan can occur at any time during the appraisal period up to 90 days before the rating cycle ends.

Step 2: Identifying Core Competencies/Developing the Work Plan (PartIIb)

Identifying core competencies is the first step in developing the Performance Plan and, once determined, forms the cornerstone of the entire process. Core competencies are broad categories of performance attributes such as customer service, quality, timeliness, etc. that support organizational values and are generally applicable to most jobs. Each core competency is considered critical. The aim of performance appraisal is to measure effectiveness. Therefore, in Part IIa of the form includes generic standards against which the supervisor measures the employee's performance to determine whether it "Meets" the performance standards. These generic performance standards are guidelines; the supervisor may adapt them to meet organization needs. Each core competency is critical. There are a total of nine competencies. Additions to the nine core competencies are not permitted. The nine core competencies are:

Applied Job Knowledge (Mandatory for all employees)

Supervisory Leadership (Mandatory for supervisors)

- Teamwork
- Customer Service
- Communication
- Quality of Work
- Timeliness and Quantity of Work
- Safety
- Funds Management

Each employee must be rated against at least four applicable core competencies. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that you determine the duties and responsibilities that comprise the job and institute them into a work plan (Part IIb) as means that are used to accomplish results.

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After you develop the plan, the approving official should review and approve the plan. All parties (supervisor, approving official and employee) must then sign the appraisal.

Step 3: Monitoring Performance

Monitoring performance is the process of observing an employee's progress in meeting the applicable core competencies, thereby giving information you need to make an objective rating at the end of the appraisal period.

Consider the following guidelines:

- • Be accurate.
- • Document facts, not opinions.
- • Note direct observations of actions and results.
- • Write things down.
- • Monitor the performance of all your employees.

Progress Reviews (Part III)

Under EARS, you must conduct two progress reviews during the course of the appraisal cycle. There should be a discussion of the employee's performance at approximately mid-August and then again o/a mid-December. Progress Reviews must be documented on the form. Supervisor and employee should provide comments on the form and both sign and date. This would also be a good time to make any necessary changes in the performance plan.

You are also encouraged to meet with your employees frequently to discuss performance progress.

NOTE: The Performance Plan is not cast in concrete. It may be changed at any time during the appraisal cycle using the same guidelines given earlier. However, changes must be in effect 90 days before rating the employee.

Step 4: The Final Performance Appraisal

At the end of the appraisal cycle, you must assess the employee's performance on each applicable core competency and derive an overall summary rating.

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Following are the steps to be taken at the end of the rating cycle:

Solicit employee input (Part IV). Employees are required to submit a list of their performance accomplishments to you at the end of the rating cycle.

Gather any interim ratings (if applicable). You should consider the information from interim ratings to prepare the final appraisal.

Rate each applicable core competency (PartIIa) and Assign and Overall Rating (PartV). It is essential that your appraisal of each core competency be based on a written comparison of actual individual and organizational accomplishments against the generic performance standards. The generic performance standards provide an expanded definition of each of the levels of performance. Also, instructions are provided on the performance appraisal form for establishing a summary (overall) rating. Your Civilian Personnel Office is available to provide you with assistance.

Write a Narrative Statement. You should address the employees' accomplishments, results and impact of their work in this section of the form (Part V).

Submit appraisal to Approving Official. The Approving Official has the final say on appraisals. Therefore, you should not give the employee a copy of the appraisal until the approving official has signed off on the appraisal. After the approving official approves, you should both sign and date the form in the appropriate box.

Discuss and Nominate employees for performance cash awards and QSIs. You should discuss with the approving official the employees you would like to recommend for a performance cash award or a QSI. You must fill out the Nomination Form, indicating which form of recognition you would like to give. Employees rated "Fails to Meet" are ineligible for performance cash awards and QSIs. The supervisor would sign under "Approvals". The second line supervisor (approving official) would endorse or not endorse the nomination and the Performance Incentive Pay Official (PIPO) would give the final approval of the nomination. Most PIPOs are the commanding officer of the unit or command. Employees should not be told if they were recommend for a performance award or QSI, since the final determination resides with the PIPO.

Discuss the appraisal with the employee. You are now ready to communicate your rating to the employee. There are several steps you may take to make the maximum use of the performance appraisal discussion. You should prepare for the meeting, concentrate on performance, thoroughly explain the rating of each core competency, praise good performance, and encourage the employee. At the end of the discussion have the employee sign the form. If an employee refuses to sign, simply write "employee refuses to sign" in the signature block for the employee and date it. The rating is still final, whether the employee signs or not. The results of performance appraisals play an important part in determining base pay, performance awards, and any needed or necessary performance related corrective action.

Keys To Effective Performance Appraisal

As the law makes clear, performance appraisal is not just a "paper exercise." Continuing management and supervisory attention is required to make it work properly. That "attention" means:

Good Communication. An appraisal system works best when all those affected by it thoroughly understand its purposes and uses. You need to make sure that all employees know how the system works, what it is used for, how it affects them, and how it can benefit them. There also needs to be a mutual understanding about work performance standards, and regular feedback about work progress. It is not enough to provide feedback only at the end of the appraisal period.

Adequate Training. No appraisal system can succeed if those using it have not been adequately trained. Training and frequent practice will improve supervisory skills in coaching, counseling, providing feedback, and appraising performance.

Investing Time And Effort. The process of analyzing work and position descriptions, identifying job elements, and appraising performance sounds like a lot of work. It is. It is also your job. However, your investment of time and effort will improve organizational effectiveness through more productive, better informed, motivated, and satisfied employees.

CHECKLIST FOR SUPERVISORS FOR PREPARING EARS APPRAISALS

Beginning of Rating Cycle

_____ Develop performance plan within 30 days of supervisor or employee arrival. Supervisor should develop the plan with the employee.

_____ Assign core competencies that employee will be rated against. Each employee must have at least four core competencies. Remember, all core competencies are critical.

_____ Develop work plan (strongly encouraged). Work plan should list specific tasks, timelines, projects, etc.

_____ Discuss with approving official to get final approval.

_____ Sign and date form. Both supervisor and approving official should sign and date.

_____ Provide a copy to the employee. Employee should sign and date.

You now have an approved performance plan!!

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Progress Reviews*

_____ Hold first progress review o/a mid-August. Both supervisor and employee should provide comments, sign and date.

_____ Hold second progress review o/a mid-December. Both supervisor and employee should provide comments, sign and date.

*Only one progress review is required if appraisal period is 91-180 days. Constant communication and feedback is strongly encouraged year-round. If you feel an employee may be performing in the Fails to Meet category, contact CSA for further guidance.

Interim Ratings (if necessary)**

_____ Rate each applicable core competency either Exceeds, Meets or Fails to Meet.

_____ Write narrative comments in Part IV of the form. No overall summary rating is assigned.

** Minimum appraisal period is 90 days on an approved plan.
See COMDT INST M12430.6B for when it is appropriate to prepare an interim rating.

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End of Cycle

- _____ Request input from employee. Comments must fit in space provided on form.
- _____ Consider employee input and any interim ratings that may have been prepared.
- _____ Rate each applicable core competency either Exceeds, Meets or Fails to Meet. All core competencies are critical.
- _____ Provide written comments in the narrative section of the form (Part IV). Supervisors should discuss the employee's accomplishments, results and impact of work performance.
- _____ Assign overall summary rating of Exceed, Meets or Fails to Meet. If you are rating an employee Fails to Meet, contact CSA for further guidance.
- _____ Discuss performance appraisal with approving official for final approval. Also discuss whether to nominate employee for performance award or QSI.
- _____ Fill out nomination form (if necessary).
- _____ Sign and date both performance plan and nomination form. Both supervisor and approving official should sign and date.
- _____ Forward nomination form for performance award or QSI to PIPO.
- _____ Discuss final performance plan with employee. DO NOT TELL THE EMPLOYEE IF THEY WERE NOMINATED FOR A PERFORMANCE AWARD OR QSI. THE PIPO HAS THE FINAL APPROVAL AUTHORITY TO APPROVE/DISAPPROVE A PERFORMANCE AWARD OR QSI.
- _____ Provide a copy of the performance plan to the employee. Employee should sign and date. If an employee refuses to sign, write "employee refuses to sign" on the form in the employee's signature block and date.

You now have a final approved rating of record!!

REMINDER: Don't forget you have 30 days to develop a new plan for the next rating cycle. We recommend you do this at the same time when you discuss the final performance plan.